

# A historic cabin raising party

by Gary Titus

While hiking on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, you may have come across the remains of an old log cabin and wondered about its origins. Perhaps you examined the craftsmanship of the log corners or were curious about the men who built them and how they lived. Many of these cabins are reminders of the men who helped create the Refuge we enjoy today.

The Kenai National Moose Range, which is now the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, was established by President Roosevelt on December 16, 1941 to protect the natural range of the giant Kenai moose on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska. The concept of a moose range probably originated about 1897 with the arrival of big game hunters. One of the first (and most articulate) hunters was Dall De Weese from Canyon City, Colorado. He wrote magazine articles about his hunting adventures, gaining the attention of sportsmen from all over the world and putting the Kenai moose on the map.

With the increasing numbers of hunters traveling to the Kenai Peninsula for big game, the need for guides became essential. In 1908, the Department of Interior, District of Alaska, passed a law requiring the employment of guides for all nonresident hunters on the Kenai. These big game guides guided sportsmen from all over the world, who returned home to write books and articles about their experiences. These sportsmen were the first to see the need for protection of the Kenai's vast game lands, and they raised a call that was heard around the world.

The first big game guide on the Kenai was Andrew Berg, who arrived on the Kenai around 1889 from Finland. Andrew Berg settled in the Tustumena Lake region, where he prospected for gold, trapped, guided, and for a short time was employed as a Territorial Game Warden. During the summers from 1924 to 1936 he worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service protect-

ing salmon and seals around the Cook Inlet area. In 1902, he built his first known cabin, which still stands today and is listed on the National Historical Register. In 1935, he built the Homestead Cabin, which was his last cabin, before his death in 1939. This spring the Kenai Refuge decided to move the Homestead Cabin from the shores of Tustumena Lake to the Refuge Visitor Center so that it can be used for interpretive purposes.

In July of 2000, Refuge staff with the help of volunteers and Youth Conservation Corps high school students dismantled the cabin and moved the pieces to the Refuge Visitor Center, where it will be restored to its original condition along the Keen-Eye Trail near the parking lot.

To put the cabin back together, we are holding a cabin raising party and everyone is invited. This event will take place on Saturday, September 9, 2000 at 11am at the Refuge Visitor Center. The cabin's foundation is finished and the logs are ready to be laid. Come and watch, or join in fitting the old logs together the way they originally were, chinking between the logs with moss, or taking photographs to document the reconstruction. There will be plenty to do as the old cabin slowly comes back to shape. I will give an interpretive talk about Andrew Berg and the history of log cabins on the Refuge. In keeping with the tradition of a cabin raising, please bring a favorite potluck dish for lunch. Wes Roberts will provide music for the event. If you would like more details on this project, call me at 262-7021, or Michelle Brown, vice-president Friends of the KNWR, at 262-6377.

*Gary Titus is the Wilderness Ranger and Historian at the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Previous Refuge Notebook columns can be viewed on the Web at <http://kenai.fws.gov>.*